



I was proud to attend the kick-off of a month-long art exhibit by students from the Bloomfield school system at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford: the exhibit was titled “Identity.” I met with one of the artists, Briana Belane, an 8th-grade student at the Carmen Arace Middle School, and Principal Barbara Maybin. Briana did a self-portrait. The purpose of the project was for students to talk about their identity, and to have a strong sense of self.

Aid For Our Towns

A very important part of my job representing the people of the 2nd state Senate District is ensuring Hartford, Bloomfield and Windsor receive their fair share of state funding. I am pleased to report the following grants and reimbursements from the state in Fiscal Year 2008–2009:

	Fiscal Year 08-09
Total Education Grants	\$212,078,524
Town Aid Road Fund Grant	\$990,756
Mashantucket Pequot & Mohegan Fund Grant	\$10,315,381
Local Capital Improvement Program (LoCIP)	\$2,260,384
Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)	\$34,962,296
Total	\$260,607,340

Fighting the High Cost of Gasoline & Energy

We all know that the cost of fuel is sky-high—affecting how much you pay for gas and groceries. While we can’t stop fuel prices from rising, we can prevent tax increases from further driving up the cost. This June, we said NO to a scheduled increase in the gross receipts tax. By blocking this tax hike, we’re hoping to save you a few cents on each gallon, and that adds up. We’re also taking action to help seniors and working families survive the high cost of the looming home heating oil season.



Allowing Seniors to Receive Care at Home

Many seniors who require long-term care would prefer to receive that care in their own home or with a relative caregiver. For many, that is not an option due to Medicaid reimbursement rules. A federal program called ‘Money Follows the Person’ allows Medicaid funds to ‘follow the patient’ from nursing homes to more personalized settings. The state program can currently enroll 700 seniors, but we expanded the program to accommodate up to 5,000. The state’s reimbursement rate for those in the program will climb from 50 to 75 percent for each enrollee. Most seniors prefer home care when complete independence is no longer possible, and this federal/state partnership grants that wish while shoring up the state’s finances.



Dear Neighbor:

By almost any measure, the nation is in a recession, and states across America are feeling the effects.

Connecticut faces these uncertain times with a biennial budget that makes important investments in local schools, roads, health care, school readiness, municipal aid, criminal justice programs, and other vital needs.

However, state revenue forecasts continue to drop, and just as Connecticut’s families are tightening their belts, so must our state government. While we held the line on any new spending during this past legislative session, we were still able to find ways to help the people of our state by enacting long-needed reforms in our criminal justice system, health care, consumer protection, and the environment.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Eric Coleman
State Senator



State Senator Eric Coleman

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I’m proud to
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 Hartford
 Windsor

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State Senator
Eric Coleman
2nd DISTRICT



LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

Criminal Justice Reforms

The brutal murders of three members of the Petit family in July 2007 and a deadly home invasion in New Britain in March 2008 prompted an in-depth examination of the criminal justice system in Connecticut. After soliciting input from the public, prosecutors and criminal justice experts, we passed landmark criminal justice reforms. The reforms include: tougher sentences for violent criminals, GPS tracking for sex offenders, more resources for prosecutors, and a state-of-the-art information sharing system for the people who decide which inmates receive parole.

We established a new crime of “home invasion” which targets the burglary of an occupied residence and requires a minimum 10-year sentence for this newly classified violent crime.

The legislature also approved a much tougher version of the existing persistent dangerous felony offender law, doubling and tripling jail sentences for the most violent of criminals.

One of the major faults in our criminal justice system that was uncovered in the Cheshire tragedy was that members of the Board of Parole did not have adequate background information on inmates being considered for parole. We proposed an overhaul of the outdated system, and months later Governor Rell signed the measure into law. Now members of the Parole Board must have timely delivery of inmates’ histories and the vital information they need to decide which offenders should be kept off the streets.



Cracking Down on Hate Crimes

Last year, Connecticut suffered through a rash of racist, intimidating noose incidents. A black Coast Guard Academy cadet found a noose in his luggage and, months later, another noose was left in the office of a Coast Guard race relations officer. A half-dozen nooses were found at construction sites in Stamford and West Hartford and in a West Hartford home improvement store. Another noose was left under the patrol car of a black Bridgeport police officer. Nooses are a repugnant symbol of racial hatred rooted in the lynching of black Americans. This session, the General Assembly unanimously passed, and Governor Rell signed, legislation that makes it a hate crime—on par with cross burning—to hang a noose on public or private property with the intent to intimidate or harass another person.



Protecting Homeowners and Our Economy

This year, I supported legislation to help keep families in their homes and protect our local economy from the subprime mortgage crisis. The legislation we passed created the Homeowner’s Equity Recovery Opportunity (HERO) loan program, which allows the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority to purchase home loans from lenders and place eligible borrowers on affordable payment schedules for 30-year fixed-rate mortgages. We also re-initiated the state’s Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program, reinvested in the CT FAMILIES Program, created a foreclosure mediation program, and placed new restrictions and license requirements on mortgage brokers and lenders.

Raising the Minimum Wage

During these tough economic times we took positive action to help working families across Connecticut. The General Assembly passed legislation to increase the state minimum hourly wage from \$7.65 to \$8.00 beginning January 1, 2009 and to \$8.25 beginning January 1, 2010. While the Governor vetoed this bill—which would have benefited nearly 65,000 low-income workers in our state and provided them with some financial relief from the rising cost of living—at the time of this writing, the legislature is contemplating a veto override.

Grandparents and Relative Caregivers

For more than 52,000 Connecticut children, family life means living in households led by grandparents or other relatives instead of biological parents. In recognition of that trend, we passed a new law—unanimous in the House and Senate—to help more caregivers receive state assistance. We



recognize that it is preferable and healthier for children to be raised in the stable surroundings these households provide, especially after a nuclear family breaks up. Current law allows a Probate Court to qualify next-generation caregivers for one-time grants for such things as a bed, a winter coat or even summer camp. The new law grants the state Superior Court authority to make these extended families eligible for similar expenses.

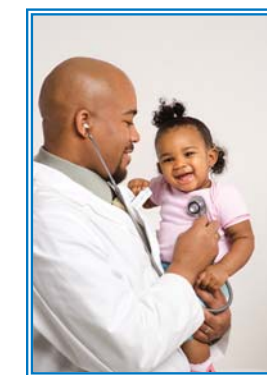


Lowering Health Care Costs for Municipalities and Small Businesses

This legislative session we tried to tackle one of the biggest issues driving up our property taxes—health care costs for our cities and towns. The Connecticut Healthcare Partnership would allow municipalities, small businesses and nonprofits to voluntarily join the state employee health insurance plan. By expanding this large pool of insured, we would increase bargaining power and lower costs for municipalities. Not only would this benefit property tax payers, but it would also benefit small businesses—they create the vast majority of jobs in Connecticut, but are hit the hardest when it comes to skyrocketing health care costs. As of this writing, the governor has indicated that she will veto this bill.

Correcting Health Care Disparities

As a basic human right, all Connecticut residents should have equal access to the highest quality health care services available. However, research and experience have shown that many people encounter barriers to quality health care based on race, ethnicity, national origin and linguistic ability. I supported the creation of a Commission on Health Equity that will work to identify the causes of disparities in our health care system and eliminate them. The commission will also work to improve the health of all Connecticut residents and will report back to the legislature with recommendations by June 1, 2010.



ADDRESSING TEEN PREGNANCY

I took the opportunity to discuss the issue of teen pregnancy and child care during a meeting with a group of students from Prince Technical High School in Hartford who are involved with the Wheeler Clinic’s Adolescent Leadership Program. I listened carefully as the students discussed the need to increase child care slots in Hartford and a child care facility at the high school. They said it will help pregnant teenage girls and teen mothers stay in school and reduce the dropout rate.

